



## DRAGONS ABREAST AUSTRALIA

ACN 104 261 029

[www.dragonsabreast.com.au](http://www.dragonsabreast.com.au)

GPO Box 1948, Darwin NT 0801

Tel: 08 8941 8923 Fax: 08 8941 0821 Mob: 0418 898 082)



NATIONAL NEWS BULLETIN No. 5 - May/June 2004

Co-editors – Pat Hancock (NT) and Anna Wellings Booth (ACT)

Email: [editor\\_newsletter@dragonsabreast.com.au](mailto:editor_newsletter@dragonsabreast.com.au)

[newsletter@dragonsabreast.com.au](mailto:newsletter@dragonsabreast.com.au)



STOP PRESS!!!

Australian Story goes to air on 14<sup>th</sup> June and will feature Dragons Abreast Australia

Greetings all,

There's never a dull moment as a member of DAA! Lots of joy, fun, competition, TV cameras whirling, paddling the Ord River and, alas, sadness. Our thoughts have been with Margot and her Sydney crew on the loss of team member Christine Barker. It was wonderful that the *Australian Story* production unit were able to spend time with Christine before she died and what a splendid tribute to Christine and her family. Michelle will advise coordinators when the story will be going to air. From what I have heard I believe the story will capture the essence of what Dragons Abreast Australia is – sharing, daring, caring, participating, dreaming, and, sometimes, winning.

With all the buzz about the Budget and the imminent end of financial year it might be timely to give thought to the DAA budget in a very minor way. We won't encourage you to do what Mr Costello wishes and go forth and multiply (although we are very proud of our baby Dragons!) but we do encourage you to go forth and encourage all paddlers to take out individual membership in DAA! An easy way to do this is to just add the \$10 on to your Club membership fees. I think some of the confusion is that if your Club belongs to DAA why then should individuals also become members.

From my perspective (and mine only!)

I proudly belong to DAA because:

- I believe in the strength of numbers;
- I believe so much more can be achieved by membership of a national body;

- I believe it gives DAA enormous credibility with national and international Clubs;
- I believe it adds strength when applying for grants and national sponsorship;
- I believe that Club membership fees, etc. vary from State to State and that it is essential to maintain that individuality. However, that sense of 'belonging' to a 'mushrooming' group of diverse women participating around Australia is so very powerful;
- I believe that individual membership should remain affordable (\$10 is say 3 cappucinos!)

And, I believe that I should stop rambling with a final word from the essential wisdom from the collected works of *Antoine de Saint-Exupery*:

*When we exchange warm hugs,  
compete in races, join together to save one  
of us in trouble, cry aloud for help in  
the hour of danger – only then do we learn  
that we are not alone on earth.*

(From *Wind, Sand and Stars*)

*Anna WB (Bottom end co-editor).*

### THANK YOU - BERLIE

for the donation of sports bras to our DAA survivors (they are actually called "Zen Seamless Singlet, style A230J).



## OUR STARS

Congratulations to:

**Martine Boughton** (and Stevan of course!) on the very exciting news of a baby dragon on the way & to **Caroline Bommer** who is also expecting her second baby dragon!

**Vivienne Gregg** for demonstrating her great organisational skills for Perth and Shanghai and **Catherine McGrath** for initiating the Australian Story interest in our group.

**Margaret Wolf** for her position as Assistant Manager to Melanie Cantwell for Team Australia in Shanghai.



**FROM THE EXECUTIVE** -We don't seem to have stopped and the media has been pounding at the door - DAA is certainly flavour of the month, with lots of good publicity! I am delighted to see that the exposure is happening right across Australia and that all our groups are able to benefit!

Bring involved with **Australian Story** was an interesting and at the same time challenging experience. The crew were just so professional and a delight to deal with, but having to troll back into the deep recess of my mind was quite emotionally exhausting and challenging. I am very grateful to **Catherine McGrath** for initiating this story and honoured that **Don McKenzie**, the founder of the BCS dragon boat movement agreed to be involved and **Donna Leon**, the producer from "They've Got Game" agreed that the footage from Rome could also be used. I am also personally very touched and grateful that the family of **Christine Barker** agreed to be involved with the story at such a momentous time in their lives and a special thank you to my own surgeon **Dan Campbell** and to **Jenny Petterson** and her oncology team!

I am assured by the producer, **Ben Cheshire**, that they will deal with our story with integrity & am very interested to see the final outcome, as there must be hours and hours of tape to squeeze into a half hour show!

One of the paddlers asked me the other day "if you knew then, that this movement was going to grow into this - would you have started it?" That is an excellent question but the answer is really simple - Dragons Abreast grew because it was embraced by women all across Australia. I believe it was embraced because it offered something that has

been lacking - what the magic ingredient is, I cannot exactly say! But it is just marvelous that we have all been able to experience some fabulous times together as a result of DAA and best of all we have kept breast cancer firmly in the public eye - that is just so important, as until the cure is found, our job is not done!

As we move forward, in the next step of the DAA journey, I would like to take the opportunity to remind all members that **DAA is definitely not a competitive team** - we stand for participation, inclusiveness, support, promotion, awareness and more. Some of our members go on to achieve personally with competitive teams, but we must never lose sight of what DAA is all about and the reason for our being in existence. Occasionally that little competitive streak flares up in all of us, that is just human nature, but then, when we lose paddlers, such as Christine Barker, or we read the articles written by new Pink Ladies, such as Lexie Warren's (her article appears further on in this newsletter), that is a really stark reminder of why we exist and also of the positive aspects of DAA!

I was delighted to have the opportunity to meet with **Tracie King** and **Linda** from Dragons Abreast Geelong on my recent visit to Melbourne. They are so enthusiastic and I am sure will soon have their own boat located at Geelong.



*Linda Cooke, Michelle Hanton, Susan Tulley & Tracie King*

I am also very pleased to report that

- our abstract "**A Journey with the Dragon Spirit - Dragons Abreast Australia**" submitted to BCNA for the Melbourne Conference has been accepted
- that the grant application on behalf of **Dragons Abreast Port Lincoln** has been successful. \$2,700 from the Department of Family & Community Services - Volunteer Small Equipment Grant.

I look forward to catching up with many of you in Melbourne this August! *Michelle Hanton*  
*National Coordinator*

# AROUND THE WATERWAYS

## Review of Perth – by Vivienne Gregg

Didn't we all have fun in Perth?! The welcome dinner with its surprise delicacy of Patagonian Toothfish made the meal a great success - lovely food, great company, thoughtful presentations to and by Michelle, acknowledging those who have contributed so much to Dragons Abreast.



*Vivienne Gregg, Claire McConaghy (NSW), Yvette Libregts (WA) & Prue Menzies (Vic)*

The supporters who travelled to Perth were wonderful: taking kms of video, photos and just being there to cheer us along. Michelle's dad and the others might have thought they were there with their own families, but we all adopted them as our own, and Greg Candy (Pru's other half) was always to be noticed wearing the DAA shirt and hat!

It was so wonderful to be able to meet, talk and paddle with the lovely Amazons (DA Perth group) and we wish you success with your paddling in Perth.

**Melanie Cantwell** deserves a huge pat on the back for the unending support she provides not only to Sydney DA but also to all Pink Ladies. I think we're all lucky to have her in such a prominent position with AusDBF as she has all paddlers' interests at heart.

It's fun to be in a city or state team, but it's a fantastically warm feeling to participate in a composite team, with women of all shapes and sizes, from all parts of Australia. And, all praise to those who have achieved places with their sporting teams and who still join with DA whenever possible.....that nicely addresses the question of whether we're there for sporting success or for fellowship. Yes, we can have both!

And now it's time to plan for Shanghai, hopefully the boats will be good, the jellyfish will stay in Perth and the weather will be as good as it was on the Canning River? The girls who paddled with some sporting team members in the women's masters are looking forward to representing Australia. Hopefully there will be a good number paddling with DAA or Internationally Abreast in China and we really hope that TEAM AUSTRALIA members will be able to join the other Pink Ladies

often (if not on the water then in a restaurant, sightseeing, etc).

A little word just for those intrepid sweeps - **Joanne, Sylvia and Michelle** - we were all so impressed by the way in which you handled those extremely demanding water conditions (also **Vivienne** from Perth). It was a big ask to maintain the course and keep us on our straight way....but you managed the task admirably. In fact you looked as much at home on the water as did the dolphins frolicking nearby.

To **Jan Skorich, Anne Gates and Yvette Libgrets** many thanks, because it's not an easy job being a team captain, and you each succeeded admirably in arranging your troops. Officer material obviously, wouldn't you agree Major Narelle?

Everything about being in DAA is wonderful, and I'd like to say how much I enjoyed being with you all. *Vivienne Gregg, NSW Coordinator*

## DRAGONS ABREAST AUSTRALIA – SA Teams Dragons Abreast Port Lincoln

We had a wonderful weekend with **Steve and Julie Clinch** from **Water Warriors** in Adelaide, they have very kindly taken us under their wing along with the new Adelaide team, **Warriors Abreast**.

During the training weekend we had lots of fun, even a very "unexpected" roll over, but the great news is that by the time Steve and Julie come back on 22<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> May, we will have "trainer wheels" to help keep those half boats upright.

Apart from our fortnightly get togethers for chats and coffee (along with the occasional 5 minutes of fitness training!), we have been doing lots of fund raising to hopefully have a brand new full size boat in Port Lincoln by the end of this year. (Some say by September, but time will tell!).

We have been grape picking (in the rain), packing those small cans of tuna into sleeves that are shrink wrapped that appear on your supermarket shelves (jolly hard work, but very worth the effort), we manned a Car Wash on the Anzac holiday weekend and had a very profitable raffle.

The Ceduna Oyster Fest co-ordinator has invited us with our boats to be part of their Oyster fest over the long weekend in October (lots of oysters to eat ugh!!). A group of ladies in Ceduna are very keen to form their own Dragon Boat team, which will be wonderful. They would like us to do a demonstration but we will need to have a lot more training to do that. Ceduna is 400 kms from here, so looks like a fun weekend will be had by all who venture there.

Dragonboat SA are making plans to return to Pt Lincoln in January 2005 for the next Tunarama, so keep the Australia Day holiday in mind for a fun visit with us.

We have also designed our own logo for our local paddling shirts, we chose the Leafy Sea Dragon, along with the Water Warriors logo on our bright pink shirts and navy caps we will look wonderful (even if the paddling is still in the "L" stage).

Our thanks must go to Julie and Steve for their time and effort in helping us, we have had to start from scratch and don't have the advantage of having boats with very experienced Sweeps and Drummers here in Port Lincoln, so far, we have only been on the water one weekend, but never fear girls, by our next Tunarama, we will be trained and raring to go, so look out!!!!!!

*Sandra Sinclair & Maxine Barker*

### Warriors Abreast - Adelaide

We represent DAA in Adelaide and boats 22 members and some supporters. We are being trained by **Steve Clinch** of the **Water Warriors**.



*Deb Martin (with gorgeous baby Reubin), Jan Davies (SA) and Pam Bell (NSW) - all DAA members taken at the BCNA Think Tank in Melbourne at the end of April.*

Normal training times are 12.45pm for a 1pm. start every Saturday. Training will finish on the 29th May and will resume on 1st week of September, but members will meet once a month for a coffee and chat at the Leg Trap Hotel, Bartley Tce, West Lakes Shore in the rear lounge on the third Saturday of the month.

*Jan Davies, Coordinator Warrior Abreast*

### Tassie Report

The latest from the deep south. Now we're in winter type climate we are still paddling, and plan to continue, weather permitting, just add another layer of clothes.

We had a fund raising film night, at Lindisfarne Club, for the club, the proceeds went to them to help them extend their gym, which in turn will make room for a second boat for us. We are negotiating for a trailer, and looking for a second hand caravan to carry our gear, use as a changing room and provide tea or coffee when we go around the state. It will, of course be painted pink, and suitably logoed. The idea is to spread the word, to get more members and interest others in getting a boat! *Moiria Cannell, Coordinator DA Tasmania*

**Northern Territory Report** - NT has been flat out! The Ord Marathon, radio interviews promoting the *My Journey* kits for BCNA as well as a busy June planned with a Wine tasting and 2 movie night.

Our biggest news is that we have an office!!! **Dragon HQ** should be operational by 1 July - we are currently having it painted and carpeted. Having the office means much of the paperwork for both Dragons Abreast NT and NTBCV can move to the office - freeing up considerable space at the various committee members houses!

We were delighted to receive a donation of \$500 from the Business & Professional Women's golf day held recently - that money will go towards sending NT representatives to the BCNA conference.



*Birthday celebrations for Jenny Young*

We congratulate **Vera McMahon** on her successful Sky Dive as part of her 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebrations & helped **Jenny Young** also celebrate her 50<sup>th</sup> with a cake at the recent BBQ held after training to welcome the Qld DA girls to Darwin before the Ord trip! *Judy Smith, NT Rep for DAA*

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**29 July - 1 August - NSW Masters**

**Games, Bankstown, Sydney.** If you

are interested in joining with a DAA team contact Margot Case

[mcase@primus.com.au](mailto:mcase@primus.com.au) from DA

Sydney. Or to enter a full team -

Contact Melanie Cantwell

[info@dragonboatsnsw.org.au](mailto:info@dragonboatsnsw.org.au)

**November 2004 - Pan Pacific Masters Games,**

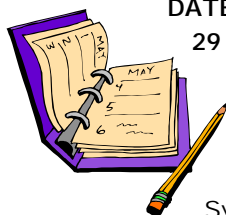
**Gold Coast** Contact: Yvonne Dolman

[yvonne06@bigpond.com](mailto:yvonne06@bigpond.com) from DA Qld if you want to be part of a composite DAA team.

### CANADIAN ADVENTURE TRIP!!!

Please let **Yvonne Dolman (Qld)**

[yvonne06@bigpond.com](mailto:yvonne06@bigpond.com) Tel: 0438 016 778 - know if you are planning on being part of the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary for Abreast in A Boat trip to Canada. All information will then be emailed directly to you as it comes to hand. Vivienne Gregg & Elspeth Humphries are working on some side trips & we will



be looking as group accommodation for during the races.

**A suggestion from Jan Skorich, our wonderful webmaster!** (picture here with husband Alek!)

Jan suggests that we all start practicing for the traditional skit and that Lynn Harden's - **I'm A Survivor** to the tune of Waltzing Matilda would be really great because it is so easily identifiable with Australia.



The words are on the website and Jan thinks for the skit we could have the whole song, it would be a pity to cut it short! Perhaps we could all learn the chorus and some of those who are more musically talented (& can sing in tune!) could be the leaders!

If you cannot access the website please email Jan [webmaster@dragonsabreast.com.au](mailto:webmaster@dragonsabreast.com.au) or your coordinator to arrange a copy to be sent.

#### ABOUT PADDLES!

All Grey Owl High Performance and Carbonshaft paddles with the 202 label continue to be certified under the current 202a IDBF Paddle Spec. Please note that this does not apply to any other Grey Owl model.

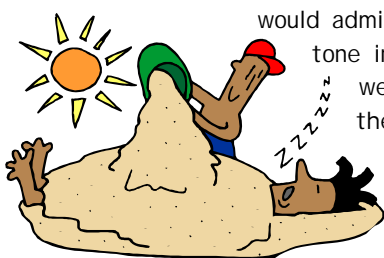
#### COUCH AND POTATO

This is the story of two muscles called Couch and Potato.

Couch and Potato loved to go dragon boating BUT they didn't like getting out of bed and wanted lots of coffee before they could get going in the morning. When Tuesday came along, Potato would nudge Couch and say "it's Tuesday, up you get" and off they would go. They really enjoyed every minute and loved to work hard and when they got home

would admire their shape and tone in the mirror. They were very proud when they did well in races and lectured other muscles about the need to get going and doing things.

But then on Thursday the alarm would go off and you would hear "ummmm, nooooo - we've had Tuesday already" mmmmmmm,snore. Again Potato would give Couch a shove and off they would go again. On Saturday the alarm would go off and Couch would be jumping up and grabbing at Potato saying "are you ready yet? are you ready yet?, Its Saturday - cake day come on!" Couch would give Potato a hard stare and off they would go. But when Sunday came around it was Couch who was getting Potato up again. Now potato worked just as hard as Couch and really enjoyed the training but really he was thinking as it



got colder that a day or two off would be nice. Snuggled up cosy and warm.

The days did start to cool off and while Couch was as keen as ever Potato was getting a bit slower and complaining and so one day Couch suggested they stay home. The next week again the same thing happened only they decided to not go Tuesday and Thursday. Saturday was cake day so you had to go then and oh well there was just Sunday so better go then. BUT the next week they went Saturday and on Sunday it rained and they sat by the fire having hot chocolate and muffins. MMMMMMMM. They both agreed that the day had been wonderful and so, you guessed it, the next week they only went Saturday.

The days got colder and the frosts heavier and on Saturdays they would listen to their mates, Too and Hard, who sat down the back, and Bone and Lazy, who came once a month in the summer, and then there was So and Tired and Not and Again, and they all seemed to be coming less and enjoying muffins and hot chocolate more and more. They weren't listening to ones like Fit and Healthy, Boundless and Energy, and who would listen to Young and Gorgeous anyway, who were still paddling every day that there was training.

Comes the warmer months and Potato and Couch heard the alarm again and tried to bounce out of bed. One go, two goes and ... better roll out says Couch. Out of the cupboard came the paddling gear. "OOOOH, they've shrunk" cried Potato. So they found some track pants and a sloppy joe and off they went. They pushed in the boat and Potato was puffing, "must have heavier new seats since last year" was his thought. They paddled out and Couch had to stop, "you're going to fast" he called to the strokes, "no-one can do that pace". As the morning progressed and the sweep kept reminding them that their timing was wrong, "well can't be us," was their reply. They stopped and they started and wondered what was causing their lack of performance 'use it or lose it' was what echoed in their mind. "that can't be us - we're here all the time!"

On the way home Potato watched Couch who was deep in thought. As if feeling the eyes of Potato on him, Couch said, "clothes too tight, puffing and panting, not keeping up and timing all out, it wasn't others, it was us you know! We have not used it and it looks like we have lost it."

They stood at the mirror and it told the sad story of a once toned body now showing the effects of muffins and Chocolate and NO training.

Couch and Potato made a pact there that day that they wanted to be the best that they could with bodies and minds that were agile and that were fit and healthy.

*The Message* - don't become like Couch and Potato and have to start all over again. Eat the

muffins and hot chocolate and enjoy the friendship and paddle through winter - at least on cake day.

*(Re-printed from ACT newsletter with permission of the inspirational Robyne Kellett)*

### **Reflections – by Lexie Warren**

On Monday 10 May 2004, I enjoyed a sunset cruise on Lake Argyle, WA with a bunch of new dragon boating friends. Watching the last rays of sunlight dance over the water as the colours in the sky deepened into fiery reds and burnt oranges signifying the end of another glorious day in the Kimberleys, I reflected upon the circumstances which had brought me to such a beautiful place and such a wonderful moment in time. It was hard to stop the tears welling up in my eyes as I looked at that sky, lost in my thoughts.

I was diagnosed with breast cancer on 28 March 2003 and underwent a lumpectomy on 31 March 2003. Like many, my surgery was followed by months of aggressive treatment with chemotherapy and radiotherapy, and by late October 2003, I had finished all of the “hands on” treatments. Now, I thought, for those five years of tamoxifen tablets.... 1 tablet, 2, 3, ... but who's counting?

I first heard of Dragons Abreast Australia while still undergoing my treatment and immediately knew that it was something in which I wanted to be involved.

I was particularly keen on the trip to Vancouver, Canada in June 2005 to celebrate 10 years of dragon boating for international breast cancer awareness, but there was only one little problem. I didn't know how to dragon boat. Grabbing the bull, or should I say, dragon, by the horns, I fronted up to my first training with the Brisbane River Dragons and Dragons Abreast on a hot, sticky Brisbane morning in January.

So many new faces, so many great personalities! .... and how would I remember the names? (I was still suffering from chemo brain, even on a good day)... How un-co could I be? No matter what I did, it just felt WEIRD! ... but I just loved it! Drenched and looking like a drowned rat and with wobbly legs and arms at the end of that first session, I was hooked.... and I was on that road to Vancouver.

Before Dragons Abreast, I had first seen dragon boating while visiting some ex-pat friends in Hong Kong in May 2002. They were training for the Stanley Dragon Boat Championships due to be held in the weeks after my visit. I thought, “this is such a bizarre and strange sport” and the many photos in my album taken that day are certainly testament to those thoughts.

Funny how things turn out! Now, only 2 years later, and more importantly, a little over 12 months after breast cancer, I am a Dragons Abreast Pink Lady!

We at the Brisbane River Dragons and Dragons Abreast heard about the Kununurra Dragon Boat Ord River Marathon via an email and, with many thanks to the efforts of Petra De Jong of Brisbane River Dragons (it's a great

advantage to have a travel agent in the club!) and Sue Bowen of Brisbane Dragons Abreast, a group of hardy, or perhaps fool-hardy, paddlers signed up for a quiet Sunday paddle of a mere 55km which was promoted as ...the equivalent of 20,000 sit-ups! Getting closer to the date, I kept thinking to myself... We must be nuts???

We opened the invitation up to other local clubs in south-east Queensland to see if anyone else would like to join us and some Gold Coasters, Joan from Broadwater Dragons and Vicky, Robyn and Mike from Burleigh Fire Dragons, signed up for our composite team as well. After a last minute hitch, which unfortunately saw two of our group, Sue Bowen and David Robinson, having to pull out, eleven of us all up ventured off to the wilds of the Darwin in the Top End and then onto Kununurra, WA. Amongst our group there were six Pink Ladies/Laddies - four survivors, Lyn Moore, Jo Parry, Rosie Loft and myself and two supporters, Liz Hollingshead and Klaas van Noord.

Some of us decided to travel to Darwin a little earlier so we could take in some sights. On the night we arrived, Lyn “Goldilocks” Moore enjoyed trying out lots of different beds in our dorm room in the Darwin backpackers before finding the one that was just right! Jo, Liz, Lyn and I went on a day trip to Litchfield National Park the following day with its magnificent waterfalls full to the brim at the end of the wet season and swimming in waterholes against the rush of the water coming over those falls. I knew I was in the Territory when I saw a sign on the side of the road that said, “Croc, Barra and Buffalo Burgers” and the familiar cry while we were driving through the Park was, “Look, there's a termite mound, and another... and another ... and another...”.

Upon returning to Darwin that night, the four of us were welcomed by the Darwin Pink Ladies for a paddle at their training session. We also enjoyed the sausage sizzle complete with champagne, pink of course, held to celebrate various members' birthdays and anniversaries and our attendance. This was my first trip away with a group of Pink Ladies so it was great to experience the spirit of Dragons Abreast and be welcomed by new friends amongst strangers in a different city in Australia.

Our Brisbane/Gold Coast group rented a mini van in Darwin for the drive to Kununurra. We broke the trip up and stayed overnight in Katherine after a great cruise at the Katherine Gorges and dinner out with some of the Darwin crowd driving to WA, and headed for the long drive ahead to Kununurra on the Saturday. Bloated cows on the side of the road, road trains, toilet breaks and convoys of slow caravans presented the biggest concerns for the road trip. Of course, we had the obligatory photo at the WA border crossing and one of the highlights was when our driver, Jo passed a massive road train on the Victoria Highway after the Victoria River Homestead, to much whoopla-ing from all of us in the back of our mini van.

Arriving in Kununurra after the long day's drive, a teams' briefing was held in the resort's bar. Here we were presented with our essentials for the paddle which had been donated by the generous sponsors - tubes of sunscreen and bottles of water, and lots of them! We were also presented with our Certificates of Participation and Kununurra Dragon Boat Marathon T-shirt before the paddle. Was this in case we got eaten by crocs along the way, we wondered?

The evening before the Marathon, Kununurra and the Ord Valley Muster put on its finest with a wonderful concert, the Kimberley Moon Experience with the sounds of Wendy Matthews, local indigenous performers, James Blundell and the Darwin Symphony Orchestra, complete with fireworks from the lake, out under the Kimberley stars. Just magical! Even the thousands of bugs attracted to the lights of the stage seemed to hum along to the music and were enjoying the night. The Kununurra club had organized picnic hampers of treats for us on the night, which were greatly enjoyed and appreciated.

After the concert, it was early to bed and early to rise as the next day we would paddle 55km! This really is going to happen? We must be nuts! No, we ARE nuts! I think we were all a little anxious and morning seemed to come all too soon. Would we make it? Would the heat knock us out? Would we get burned to a crisp in the sun? Would we be attacked and consumed by crocodiles along the way?!!!!

The scenery along the paddle course was unbelievable! Carlton Gorge was beautiful and the kaleidoscope of colours of the Kimberleys getting stronger as the day awakened was something that could not easily be forgotten. The cool river water tingled on our hot skin as we dipped our hands in the water and splashed ourselves on our breaks. One image I captured was Jo as stroke in our boat with the dragons abreast emblem blazoned across the back of her pink shirt with some magnificent scenery in the background.

Yes, we are pleased to say that we did see some crocs. Freshies are your friend, they told us! ... but that childhood adage came back to me, never smile at a crocodile, and I was going with the latter! We saw some nice smaller ones at a distance, but we were a little jumpy and saw lots of suspicious logs along the way. We also saw quite a large croc too. Actually we smelt it before we saw it - white belly and little legs sticking up, poor thing was dead on the river bank .... on the far side of the river and yet, boy could we smell it! That croc was long gone!

One moment from the paddle stands out for me. On the wide stretches of the Ord in the last section of the paddle, the film crew from the ABC Australian Story were buzzing over and around our heads in a helicopter, banking steeply and filming the dragon boats. What a wonderful sight that would have made to see the three boats heading strongly down the river and the hot pink of the Pink Ladies reaching across two of those

boats with the Darwin Pink Ladies in one and our group in the Brisbane/Gold Coast combined boat!

What an amazing achievement for all participants to complete the Marathon, and without taking anything away from the others, especially so the achievement of the Pink Ladies whom took the challenge and conquered the Ord!

We were all very pleased to finish the marathon paddle. We couldn't believe that we had done it! It was quite an emotional day for many of us and the reality of what we had accomplished meant there were more than a few without dry eyes at the end. I was feeling a little overwhelmed myself and was thinking that I've actually done this. You see, I set the Ord River Marathon as my own personal challenge and a tribute to all of those who had supported me through my treatments and my first year post-breast cancer. I had only received my 12 months clearance on 8 April 2004, turned 40 on 15 April and, on 9 May, I participated in, and, am very proud to say, completed the Ord River Marathon.

Who would have thought last year that I would be able to do something like this and so soon after my breast cancer? From such adversity, great opportunities and moments have come and as an added bonus, I got to see the beauty of the sunset in the Kimberleys while enjoying a boat cruise with new friends.

A little over one year after breast cancer, I feel like I'm on top of the world and I know now that, we, Pink Ladies, can do anything! Just bring it on!

Paddles up ... and see you in Vancouver in June 2005!

*Lexie Warren, Qld Dragons Abreast - Brisbane*

PS: As Kununurra is near the Argyle Diamond Mines, I had joked all weekend about meeting a diamond miner. As luck would have it, the well-groomed young man sitting beside me on my flight from Kununurra to Darwin turned out to be a diamond miner on his way home from his two week shift in the mines. Of course girls, with a cheeky glint in my eye, I had to ask... do they get staff discount? Seems they do!



*Dragons Abreast NT on their way to Kununurra!*  
**GOODBYE CHRISTINE - a treasured friend.**

We join Dragons Abreast for a range of personal and public reasons - to get fit, to find and give support, to raise breast cancer awareness, to have fun. Underneath we know what each other has been through, the fears and pain, and the hope of life

going on. We also know that our death, or the death of one of our members from breast cancer is possible. How does the team cope when someone among us dies? It is confronting to see someone die of the disease you have had or are living with. It must be hard to be dying of a disease that many of those around you are surviving.

Sydney Dragons Abreast lost one of our members, **Christine Barker**, to breast cancer on 9 May 2004. When she became ill again, her husband



Peter had a word that was easier for all of us to hear and to speak. That word was 'journey', and this is Christine's journey, and ours.

Christine first had breast cancer in 2001. She joined Sydney Dragons Abreast when it started in February of 2003. In July 2003 she discovered

that her cancer had returned, so she went back on chemotherapy and radiotherapy. When training started again in September, unwell as she was, Christine was there. At the Masters Games in Canberra, while she was having chemotherapy, and was tired and sick, Christine competed in a race. Even at Chinese New Year at Darling Harbour, when her balance was affected by the metastases on her brain, and she needed a stick to walk, Christine, wearing her special flower-garlanded hat, got into a boat and insisted on paddling up to the group for the Flowers on the Water ceremony.

Christine's endless capacity to bounce back and join in was an inspiration to us. Every race we paddled in was for Christine. If we were a little over exuberant when we won - that was why. If she was not there when we raced, we immediately rang Christine to tell her how we had gone. Whenever we won a trophy, it spent a few days in Christine's house.

As she got progressively more ill, Christine was cared for at home by her husband and son. Soon the palliative care staff came daily. Some of us telephoned and went to visit whenever we could. We took flowers, or food, or music. Christine was

always pleased to see us and to hear the latest gossip. Eventually, when Christine needed someone to be around all the time, Peter drew up a roster of people to help care for her while the family rested, and some of the team members offered to be on it. Sometimes we massaged her feet and arms, or helped bathe her. When we knew her journey was nearly over, we said goodbye.

When Christine died, Margot, our team captain offered support for those who wanted to talk. Michelle and people from other teams sent us messages of love and support. The Canberra team had a minute's silence for Christine. These are the things that Dragons Abreast is about.

Many of us attended Christine's funeral, or celebration of Christine's life, as Peter called it, at the Balmain Sailing Club. At Peter's request, we brought our paddles and wore something pink. Christine's casket, lovingly decorated in decoupage by Peter, lay near a window overlooking the sun sparkling on Sydney Harbour. By the wall was a table covered in Christine's special things - her flowery hat, her rashie, her riding hat, her paddle. There were few flowers, as Peter wanted money to go to Dragons Abreast instead. Some of the team members played flutes and sang during the service. Members of Peter and Christine's family, and their friends, read poems and talked about Christine, and Peter made a lovely speech. Dragons Abreast, and its special place in Peter and Christine's lives, was mentioned often. Later, many people came up to us to thank us for our support, and to tell us how terrific we, from Dragons Abreast, are.

At the end of the celebration, pall bearers, some of them women, carried Christine down to the jetty and onto a boat through a Dragons Abreast Guard of Honour. A beautiful duet from *La Traviata*, Christine's favourite opera, played over the loud speaker. Four of us got into two smaller boats and spread flower petals on the water in front of the boat carrying Christine across the water. The other team members, and family and friends, stood at the waters edge and threw more flower petals into the water.

In memory of Christine, and as an important part of grieving for her, and in a way, for what has happened to our own lives, the team will have its own Flowers on the Water. Christine's paddle, with an engraved plaque on it, will travel in our boat with us whenever we train or compete.

No one wants to face the end of their own or anyone else's life. Few of us talk about it or are prepared for it. Being alongside of Christine for this journey has shown that with people around who love and care for you, who value you as a person, who visit and talk to you even when you can barely respond, who stay by your side, it is possible to face the even

the hardest challenges. A joke, a kind word,  
a gentle touch – they are everything.  
*Catherine McGrath, DA Sydney*

## UNDER THE PINK UMBRELLA

Breast Cancer Network Australia (BCNA)  
Conference

*"Still Making a Difference"*

Friday 27 – Sunday 29 August  
Melbourne, Victoria



Have you sent in your registration for the Conference yet? This is a great opportunity for dragon-boaters to renew friendships and enjoy a dinner together.

We encourage you to attend if you can. Visit

[www.bcna.org.au](http://www.bcna.org.au) to register. The full

program will be printed in the next edition

of The Beacon and it is hoped that there will be 1,000 participants from around the country. There are some scholarships available for women who perhaps might be able to attend if their registration was paid. Apply to BCNA directly at 293 Camberwell Road, Camberwell, Vic 3124 or [fbussutil@bcna.org.au](mailto:fbussutil@bcna.org.au).

In 1998 the first Breast Cancer Conference run for and by women with breast cancer was held in Canberra. The first major Field of Women was also held on the lawns behind Old Parliament House and the Breast Cancer Network Australia was launched.

At that Conference a Canadian keynote speaker mentioned Chemo Savvy – a dragon boat team in Canada and Michelle Hanton from Darwin was 'fired-up' with enthusiasm.

In 1998 they took to the water in Darwin and it was not long before I received a phone call saying I'd better get moving in Canberra because that was where the idea was born. I didn't even know what a dragon boat was but, with help and encouragement from the then president of the Canberra Dragon Boat Association **Les Williams**, and **June McMahon** a small Canberra crew took to the water in early 1999. **Janelle Gamble** established the Qld team in 2000 and pretty soon the rest of Australia was jumping aboard!

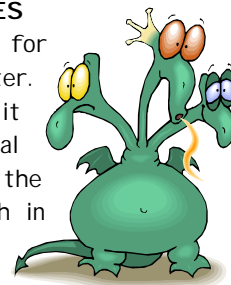
Breast Cancer Network Australia in 2002 decided to take Dragons Abreast on as a project for a 12-month period, providing funding for Michelle to be National Co-ordinator. However, the dramatic growth of Dragons Abreast outgrew the resources of BCNA and, as we were obviously doing it well on our own, the project which funded Michelle's coordination was brought to a close.

This did not mean that liaison with BCNA stopped- we just joined the many other member groups sheltering under the BCNA umbrella. Most Dragons Abreast paddlers receive the Beacon and are members of BCNA and local support groups. Several of the BCNA State representatives are members of Dragons Abreast, many of the crew members have participated in the Science & Advocacy Training, and the Public Speaking course which train members to be effective consumers reps on various Boards and committees.

*Anna Wellings Booth, ACT*

### NEWSLETTER NAMES

Very few votes were received for the name of the newsletter. After considerable discussion it was agreed this is a National newsletter and posted on the website for all to read both in Australia and overseas so the name should reflect a united (and Australian) theme, though Dragons United sounds a bit like a soccer team! The name currently with most votes is PUFF...the magic Dragon (People United For the Fight).



However, we are wondering whether it needs a name other than NATIONAL NEWS as that is what we want to convey to readers.

We invite your comments by no later than 10<sup>th</sup> June – otherwise we will be going without a name & yes, the person (whose name will be revealed next issue) who came up with PUFF will receive the mystery prize, whether or not we use the name!

*The Editors*

**What our logo represents** - The yellow twisted loop that ends in a dragon head represents the dragon spirit and its embrace of the women as it encircles them. The bright yellow colour represents life and hope.

The pink ladies - the grouping of the women together represents the strength we gain from each other & the fact that we are not alone on our journey with breast cancer. The multiple pink ladies are also an extension of the silhouette figures which are planted at the Field of Women and have gone on to become the current logo of the Breast Cancer Network Australia - of which Dragons Abreast is a member group.

The blue waves - represents the boat and the water on which we paddle.

**THE UNIFORM CHALLENGE** - can we look more spiffy & how to reduce costs!?

With our new sponsors **Lizards** now on board, we are conducting a review of the uniform, with the idea

that whatever we settle on will remain in place for the next 2 years as we know that uniforms are a major expense!. We might add to the range, but we will not change items in any significant way. We plan to have changes in place by September 2004 and we need your assistance as the logistics of uniforms for such a diverse group as DAA is, as I am sure you can imagine quite a nightmare! Please assist us in our endeavour to provide the best uniforms for DAA members by filling in this questionnaire and yes, the racing shirts will remain HOT PINK, even if designs change - as that is our signature - P I N K L A D I E S!

1. ***Should rashies be:***

Long Sleeved  Short Sleeved  Both

2. ***Instead of buying your own rashie - would you like to have a 'pool' of rashies that are just loaned and collected up each major race day?***

Yes  No  Not Sure

3. ***Should polo shirts be:***

Fitted  Loose  Both

4. ***Do you like the shorts?***

Yes  No  Not Sure

5. ***Do you like the bucket hats?***

Yes  No  Not Sure

6. ***Is there a need to supplement in any way the present range of clothing?***

Yes  No  Not Sure

7. ***Would you like to have a "good" outfit to wear when we all go out together?***

Yes  No  Not Sure

8. ***Would you like to have a "good" jacket (uniform design) to wear with pants or skirts?***

Yes  No  Not Sure

9. ***Would you like a sarong or Hawaiian shirt to wear at after-parties?***

Yes  No  Not Sure

Colour suggestion for sarong:  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. ***Would you like a pink vest (perhaps with velcro fastenings) to wear over a pink polo / rashie / shirt?***

Yes  No  Not Sure

10. ***Would you like a nice silky type scarf that could be added to your own choice of top, jacket etc, that would tie us all in as a 'team'?***

Yes  No  Not Sure

11. ***Are you happy with the present range?***

Yes  No  Not Sure

12. ***Constructive ideas and suggestions welcome - please use the space below.***

---

---

Please return this survey to **Vivienne Gregg** by no later than 30 June 2004. It may be emailed to her at [petergregg@bigpond.com.au](mailto:petergregg@bigpond.com.au) or posted to

"Karana", Rockvale Road, Armadale, NSW 2350